



FIRST THINGS FIRST

The right system for bright futures

TRIBAL AFFAIRS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is First Things First?

First Things First is a voter approved initiative to ensure the quality and accessibility of early childhood development and health programs at the community level. Proposition 203 created a new, state-level board, the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board (AZECDH), which provides oversight and guidance on the implementation of the Proposition. First Things First is also the name of the state agency created to carry out the work of the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board.

How much money does First Things First generate?

The monies are currently being collected from the \$.80 tax on tobacco products and are deposited into a state account and invested by the State Treasurer. All funds generated by the tax on tobacco products for the AZECDH Board will be spent on programs for early childhood development and health. These new monies cannot be used to offset state spending on programs already receiving state appropriations. Current revenue projections suggest First Things First will generate about \$150 million per year.

How are First Things First funds spent?

First Things First establishes Regional Partnership Councils throughout the state. The Regional Partnership Councils are to include eleven members who reside or work in the region. Funding will be based on the number of children ages birth to five years living in the area, as well as the number of young children whose incomes do not exceed 100% of the federal poverty level. Programs funded through the AZECDH Board may be conducted either by grantees in the region or directly by the Regional Partnership Council.

How are the Regional Partnership Councils selected?

Regional Partnership Councils' members are appointed by the AZECDH Board after a public application process. Notice of the time to apply will be posted on the First Things First website and distributed to associations and groups around Arizona once the regional boundary designation are made by the AZECDH Board. Council membership is made up of eleven members who must reside or work in the region and meet the established criteria in the statute. Appointed members serve four year terms, although five of the initial eleven members will be appointed for only a two year term.

How can Arizona Tribes get involved in the Regional Partnership Councils?

The Councils are to include eleven members who reside or work in the region and if an Indian Tribe is located in the regions, one tribal official or employee of a tribal government must be on the Councils. Tribal members must apply for appointment to a Council. First Things First staff will work with Tribal leaders in making recommendations to the Board for appointment of a Tribal representative.

What if an Arizona Tribe chooses to become a separate Regional Partnership Council but does not have personnel who meet each of the criteria for membership?

The Regional Partnership Councils are to include eleven members who reside or work in the region and meet specific categories. Some categories may not be available to all of the Councils, but the effort to secure applications for all the categories must be demonstrated. Having less than all eleven positions filled will not prevent a council from acting for the benefit of children.

If more than one Arizona Tribe participates in a Regional Partnership Council, would each Tribe be entitled to a seat on the Regional Partnership Council or is there only one seat per Council for each Arizona Tribe?

Each and every Arizona Tribe participating in a region would be entitled to representation on a Regional Partnership Council. During the appointment of the members of each Regional Partnership Council, the AZECDH Board would work to achieve representation from all participating Arizona Tribes within the region.

If an Arizona Tribe exists within multiple regions, would an Arizona Tribe be entitled to representation in each region where part of their Tribal lands exist?

Arizona Tribes that have tribal lands in multiple regions and choose to participate in those Regional Partnership Councils rather than creating their own separate Regional Partnership Council, would be entitled to representation in each designated region in which tribal lands have been included.

What are the benefits to a Tribe in becoming their own Region?

Arizona voters recognized that investments in young children today will give a solid foundation to children when they enter school. Along with becoming a Region, comes the responsibility of bringing together a Regional Partnership Council, which is appointed by the AZECDH Board. The Regional Partnership Council will be asked to review existing early childhood service delivery systems, current federal, state and tribal initiatives, potential funding uses, policies and best practices and to recommend improvements to the Tribal system of policies and services for young children.

Each Regional Partnership Council will be supported by a Regional Coordinator hired and funded by the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board. The Regional Coordinator will work closely with the Arizona Tribe to implement the recommendations provided by the Regional Partnership Council.

What should Tribes consider in making a decision to opt-in or opt-out of a designated region?

Each tribe must decide whether to opt-in or opt-out of a Region. This decision is due by March 1, 2008. Each tribe should consider:

- Is there sufficient funding to sustain a partnership? Funding is based upon the number of young children ages birth to 5 years and a weighted formula for poverty.
- Are there sufficient collaborators, i.e., parents, health service providers, etc., to develop a systems plan that will improve early childhood services and health on the reservation?
- Will the Regional Partnership Council have the sanction of the Tribe to complete the mission of creating a more integrated and comprehensive system of services in the local communities?

The task of reforming large systems is a challenge; however, the benefits to children's health and readiness to learn when they enter school far outweigh the challenge. The key will be deciding whether a Tribe can better help its children by opting out or staying with a designated region.

What are the benefits to becoming part of a Region in which the Tribe is located?

Pooling of resources and the collaboration across the region are two definite reasons to join a Regional Partnership Council. According to Proposition 203, an Arizona Tribe that elects to join a Regional Partnership Council will have the opportunity to join the Council as a member.

There are several reasons why an Arizona Tribe might elect to join a Regional Partnership Council: 1) The number of children ages birth to 5 years is small and would generate a small funding resource; 2) An Arizona Tribe is part of an existing partnership and is already working on a collaborative system in their geographic boundary; and 3) An Arizona Tribe, if not a member of an existing partnership, has built connections and relationships with organizations and partners that the Tribe values and the Tribe wishes to maintain, expand, and improve these collaborations to best meet Tribal needs.

What are the responsibilities in establishing the Regional Partnership Council if an Arizona Tribe decides to become their own geographic region?

Once the geographic regions have been determined by December 1, 2007 (or earlier), and tribal geographic regions have been determined by March 1, 2008 (or earlier), the AZECDH Board will receive applications for the appointment of the Regional Partnership Council. The Tribal leaders of a Tribe electing to be its own region will work with Board staff to solicit applications for the Regional Partnership Council positions. These positions are listed in the statute (A.R.S. 8-1162). Eleven members who reside or work in the region are appointed based upon the following criteria:

- One parent of a child aged five or younger at the time of their appointment to the Council.
- One child care provider.
- One health services provider.
- One public school administrator, for the purposes of this requirement, charter schools established pursuant to Title 15 are considered public schools.
- One early childhood educator.
- One member of the business community.
- One representative of the faith community.
- One representative of a philanthropic organization.
- Three “at-large” members.
- If an Indian tribe is located in the region, one public official or employee of a tribal government.

If an Arizona Tribe decides to become their own Regional Partnership Council and members have been appointed to the Council, what are the duties of the Regional Partnership Council?

Under statute (A.R.S. 8-1161), each Council:

- Shall identify the assets available for early child development and health;
- Shall use the asset information and then identify and prioritize the unmet needs for early child development and health programs in the region;

- Shall submit a report outlining the assets, coordination opportunities and unmet needs to the AZECDH Board on a biannual basis beginning September 1, 2008;
- Shall develop a Regional Plan for meeting the unmet needs, including a budget proposal, programs and services no later than January 1, 2009;
- Solicit grant/private funds to further the work of the Council; and
- Provide service and support to children and families.

There are other responsibilities related to accessibility, increasing public awareness, training in early childhood development and health, and informing parents about licensing that focus on improved outcomes for Arizona young children and their families.

How will First Things First impact Tribal Head Start, Tribal Early Childhood programs, and FACE programs?

First Things First seeks to improve the quality of early childhood development and health programs and to use research by Tribal Head Start programs, Tribal Early Childhood programs, and FACE programs to increase access to quality early childhood development and health programs.

Depending upon the distribution of grants under the Regional Partnership Councils, these programs and other services may be enhanced or expanded to serve young children.

How can Tribes get better services for their early childhood populations?

By participating as either a member of the Council of a designated region, or by opting out and becoming their own Region with their own Regional Council, Tribes can identify ways to best help children ages birth to five years be healthy and succeed in school and life.

How will the count of children be determined?

By law, the AZECDH Board must use the best information available to count children and allocate funds based on those counts. Census 2000 data will be used for determination of the child count since it is the only source of data consistent across all of Arizona.

Is First Things First just for low-income families?

No, **First Things First** will work to ensure all children are ready to succeed when they enter school. All children, regardless of income, should begin school healthy and with the skills they need for long-term educational and personal success. The formula to allocate funds does give extra weight to numbers of children whose family income does not exceed 100% of the federal poverty level to ensure funds are available to assist those most at risk. The Regional Partnership Councils will make the determinations of how the dollars within each region can best help children of all socioeconomic status succeed.

What if a Tribal government does not participate in a Region?

All Arizona children, ages birth to five years, are part of First Things First. Regional Partnership Councils must have one public official or employee of a tribal government if the Tribe is located in the region. The AZECDH Board appoints the Council members and works to ensure the composition of the Regional Partnership Councils is consistent with the Proposition. The input and participation of the Arizona Tribes is critical in meeting the needs of

all children. The Tribal representative will help ensure the needs of Tribal children are included in the plans of the Council.

Are Tribes allowed to identify a traditionalist as the faith community member of the Regional Partnership Councils?

First Things First establishes Regional Partnership Councils throughout the state. Council membership is by specific categories and is determined by an application process. One category is the faith-based member. The application for membership has very broad definitions which are inclusive of members from diverse backgrounds, which would allow, where appropriate, a traditionalist to be the faith-based Council member.

Is an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) required for a Tribe acting as a Regional Partnership Council to access the funding?

Funds are administered at the local level through Regional Partnership Councils. At this time, an IGA is not required since the Regional Partnership Council will determine needs and prepare the application to be submitted to the Board that best meets the needs of all children ages birth to five years in their Region.

If a tribe decides that it wants to establish its own Regional Partnership Council, a Tribal Resolution indicating this intent is required by the AZECDH Board. A Tribal Resolution indicating the intent of the Arizona Tribe is due by March 1, 2008 or earlier. Failure to provide a decision one way or the other will mean that the Tribe has not elected to opt out by the deadline and is therefore a member of the designated region for two years. The Tribe may again elect to opt out or remain with that Region in two years.

Are there early childhood models or best practices available to Tribes?

First Things First has hired Senior Policy Specialists who will work with the Regional Partnership Councils to research best practices and share that information with Councils. Further, the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Early Childhood Workgroup will work with First Things First to ensure best practices are shared with the Tribal communities.